

**WOMEN'S STUDIES AND ISSUES:  
A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC ANALYSIS**

Jaimee H. Bohning, South Dakota State University  
Carol J. Cumber (faculty supervisor), South Dakota State University

**Case Objectives and Use**

This field researched case illustrates the issues facing a highly-respected university academic program 30 years after its inception by exploring political and legitimacy concerns, as well as internal financial and organizational challenges faced by a department of women's studies. The issue at hand is how to reinforce and strengthen its current status as one of the premiere programs in the country within the context of many community, university, and departmental pressures. An analysis of external conditions and internal issues is presented from information gathered through interviews, internal documents, and literature review. This case allows students the opportunity to take on the role of an outside reviewer. They will gain understanding of the reality that strategic analysis and planning is not only an instrument of for-profit businesses, but is also a critical component for ensuring educational institution success. Specific objectives for students include identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the department, defining possible courses of action for the department, creating a plan to implement the most effective course of action, revising the mission statement and/or goals of the Department, and rewriting the student learning objectives to create a clear process by which all Women's Studies majors will be evaluated. This case is intended for use in strategic management, education administration and women's studies courses at the undergraduate and graduate level.

**Case Synopsis**

Dr. Maria Bevacqua spent a year and a half trying to balance what has felt like the weight of the world on her shoulders. As the new department Chair of the Women's Studies program at Minnesota State University-Mankato, she allocated this time to learning all of the elements involved in maintaining an academic department. After 30 years of existence, the department had built a unique and strong presence within the university community as well as the community at large. However, Dr. Bevacqua recognized that the time to maintain had ended and the department was in need of a new direction. With Women's Studies departments across the nation facing the challenges of maintaining the legitimacy of their program amidst accusations of institutional uselessness, Dr. Bevacqua recognized the monstrous challenge she faced. Along with many community, university, and departmental pressures that impacted the department, Dr. Bevacqua also had to address the issues of financial resources, student involvement, enrollment, and energy, while at the same time increasing student and department performance. All of these factors had to be taken into consideration while trying to revamp one of the oldest Women's Studies programs in the United States.

**Contact Person**

Carol J. Cumber, Department of Economics, Scobey 504, South Dakota State University,  
Brookings, SD 57007. Voice 605.688.4849, Fax 605 688.6386, carol.cumber@sdstate.edu.